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## EDITORIAL

This is our 10<sup>th</sup> quarterly Newsletter since the **Friends of Northwood Cemetery** was established in 2008; the aim of these Newsletters is to keep Friends informed of work and progress taking place in the Cemetery and to feature other relevant topics. This quarter the topic is **Butterflies**; as you can read inside we have a rich variety of them in the Cemetery - including some very rare species.

But the big news this quarter is that the Heras safety fencing around the west chapel (mortuary) has gone *at last* and the building has been stabilised. This work was funded by the IW Council but that's about as much as we expect them to contribute; any further work is down to us and obtaining a grant will require us to identify a sustainable use for the building. There's no money around for restoration *per se* (other than from a private benefactor?) without there being a real purpose for that restoration.

There is some cosmetic work we can undertake - such as treating the wooden door, painting the wood that has been used to board up windows and painting the east wall seen in the lower picture here.

This picture also shows the Pyracanthas shrub planted behind the temporary rustic fence which is designed to deter youngsters from climbing on the rigid steel beams that protrude from the building. These rest on piles and hold the building up.

As mentioned in the May Newsletter we are funding an initial survey on the east chapel to determine its structural condition before deciding where to focus our attention.



# CELEBRATION OF LIFE OPEN DAY

**Sunday 12th September 2010  
11am - 4pm**

*Remembering the lives of loved ones*

**Come and lay flowers  
 Meet the Trustees  
 Free walking tours every hour  
 Explore the wildlife and fauna  
 Chat to Bereavement Services  
 Advice from Stone Masons  
 Talk to our Conservationist  
 Search the Burial Archives  
 Become a member  
 Free refreshments  
 ALL welcome**

**Come along and support the  
 Friends of Northwood Cemetery**

Meanwhile, work continues on and around the Friends' House on the Newport Road boundary of the Cemetery which has been used as a store for our nature conservation team; it now has an electricity supply and a worktop so it is adopting new roles as (i) a place to open up our computer to help visitors find graves they are seeking; and (ii) with a fridge and a water urn now installed, to dispense a cold drink or a cup of tea or coffee

We have also eliminated damp from this building (we hope!) by removing the soil that was resting against its wall two feet above floor level (it was built in the 1850s well before damp proof courses came into being); now a bed of stones should enable water to drain away - and we've protected the wall with a waterproof membrane (we have **Tony Hayman** and **Rob Smith** to thank for this work).

Next month we have a **Celebration of Life** event at the Cemetery - on **Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> September**. See this as "an open day" for us to show visitors what we have done and what we intend to do; it's a means of communicating with people other than through the medium of this Newsletter. Please do pop in, even for half-an-hour; there are many "Friends" whom are only known to one or two Trustees and it would be really good to meet new people and make new friends. Further details are on the back of this Newsletter.

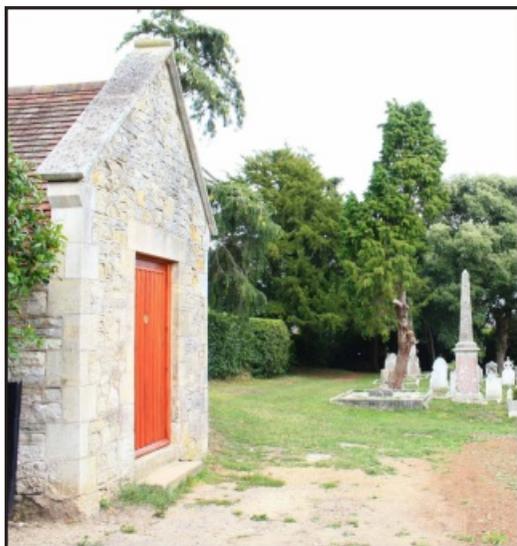
Inside this edition **Richard Day** mentions the area in front of the Friends' House and the work we intend to do on that. As you look east down the pathway running in front of the Friends' House, you'll clearly see the **Atkey** obelisk right in front of you.

The Atkey family have told us that they have commissioned the cleaning of the obelisk and restoration of the vault stonework - we are thrilled that this corner of Plot 1 is receiving attention from the family. A big very "thank you" goes to them, great-great-grand daughters of **Pascal Atkey**.

More good news is on the horizon; as you will know the Southern Co-op selected the **Friends of Northwood Cemetery** as one of its 'good causes' last year and 1.5% of the spending of holders of their Community Support cards will flow to us at the end of the year. The cut-off is 30<sup>th</sup> September and to date the figure set aside for us is in excess of £9,000 - so £10,000 is well within reach!

After helping to produce 10 editions of this Newsletter it's time for fresh ideas so we are looking for someone to take on the interesting role of Editor; could that be **you**? If you are one of those many supporters ("Friends") who would like to make a contribution, but don't know quite how, please consider this very rewarding opportunity. It would be a real help to the Board of Trustees who have many time pressures. Any of the Trustees would be very pleased to hear from you!

**Jon Matthews**  
Editor



The Friends' House and Atkey obelisk

## Nature Conservation

There is not a great deal of activity in this quarter as it is in the summer months that work slows due to the proliferation of animals seeking to propagate and therefore a time when we have to be careful about disturbing this process.

What we have done is to turn our attention to some non-conservation jobs - such as digging out the soil beside the Friends' House above floor level which was causing damp inside. After installing a waterproof membrane, the trench we dug was then refilled with stones designed to take the water away from the building.

Our current nature work involves tidying branches on trees which had previously been cut down or trimmed, removing stones and roots from behind the hedges on both sides of the entrance and finishing off our trimming of the bottom of the yews which we cut down last year.

It is with great pleasure I can report that all the yews cut down nearly to the ground are regenerating very well with lots of green shoots. Once these have reached a respectable height in a few years they will be maintained as bushes rather than trees. Any regrowth on other trees has been or will be cutback.

During August **Gary Peacey** (a "Friend" and a professional gardener) and I will conduct a survey round the four plots behind the bus shelter to see what should be done come the autumn. Once this survey is produced the Trustees will discuss the proposed work and produce a programme of jobs to be done from around mid-September onwards.

The other ongoing task is the planting of a wild flower garden for the area in front of the Friends' House.

We only have one chance to get this right so we are taking some more professional advice.

We expect that this will consist of replacement Holly Trees with a succession of wild flowers, grasses and bulbs resulting in what we hope will be a near year long, wildlife-friendly, show of colour.

**Richard Day**  
Nature Conservation Leader



Work in progress

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## Archivist's Report

The inaugural meeting on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2008 took place in the west chapel and 50 supporters turned up to help form the **Friends of Northwood Cemetery** - an excellent indication that Northwood Cemetery and its twin chapels was also loved and respected by many.

Most of the 250 "Friends" who have joined have done so because they have loved ones interred in the Cemetery - but many have also commented on other aspects of this seventeen acre plot: the tranquillity; the birds; the trees; the flowers; the butterflies and the red squirrels that reside there. A cemetery it may be - but over past 154 years it has developed into something a lot more.

It has much to offer to anyone that appreciates natural history and has been a popular area for a relaxing walk for many locals since its inception in 1856. In fact, it is probably the most important 'conservation' area in Cowes; much of it untouched by farming as it has been developed from what was part of Shamblers Copse, an ancient woodland.

The Cemetery and its surrounding copses and fields have always been frequented by local children, including myself. I was brought up just fifty yards from the main gates and spent many hours during my own childhood in this area - always stepping over the graves and not treading on them!

My first task was to transcribe the burial registers onto a computer spreadsheet in order that it could be displayed as a 'searchable' database on the Friends' website. A labour of love, I guess, with much 'burning of the candle at both ends' over a period of 18 months. Now that the searchable on-line burial register is established I receive a few enquiries each week - usually asking for help with locating a grave. This is one of the most rewarding aspects of the job as a lot of visitors think that their loved-one's grave has long been forgotten and now impossible to locate.

Fate seems to play a big part in some enquiries. As an example, recently I visited the cemetery on a Saturday morning, just to say "hello" to the Conservation Team (I am not known for my gardening skills and prefer to sit in front of my computer and beaver away at the records!).

Soon after my arrival, I was approached by a young couple who asked if I was local and whether I was familiar with the cemetery layout. I told them I was the Archivist and promptly produced my laptop. After looking up the grave number that they were hoping to locate (which they had obtained from the web-site), I escorted them to the very graveside. Mixed emotions were in evidence there; enormous satisfaction for me and pathos for the couple. They had, for the first time, seen the grave of one of their ancestors. It transpired that they were from London and only on the Island to attend a wedding - but took some time out in the hope that they just might be able to locate the grave.

What a stroke of luck that I had decided to call in on the Conservation Team!

A walk from the main gates to the southern boundary with Somerton Farm measures a quarter of a mile. Walking around the perimeter will clock up three quarters of a mile.

The Cemetery is also a favourite with dog owners, dozens of whom walk their charges in it daily. Please respect the (circa) 17,000 interred there; if you are a dog walker please don't let your dog run over their graves - and please 'pick up' after they've done their business (we do have a few errant visitors risking a £100 fine - not **Friends of Northern Cemetery** I am sure!).

**Barry Sowerby**  
Archivist

## The Time Capsule

A fascinating glimpse of life in post-war Cowes has been unearthed in the Cemetery

During ground stabilisation work to the west chapel, workmen discovered a 'time capsule' that had been hidden in a wall cavity for 54 years.

The capsule, an old post war, blue and white babies dried milk tin, was stuffed with newspapers dated 1956. Presumably that was the date that the tin was buried by previous workmen that were renovating the chapel due to bomb damage from the May 1942 blitz on Cowes.



Also found inside the tin was a timesheet headed *T. Westbrook & Sons Ltd, Market Hill, Cowes* and dated 26<sup>th</sup> February 1955. Names on the timesheet include a M Barnes, a Mr Pell and a Mr Dawkins.

It appears to have been written out by the apprentice plumber Mr Hall and authorised at the bottom of the sheet by the foreman, Mr Counsell.

The most interesting item in the tin was a photograph of the collapsed George Hotel, which formerly stood at the bottom of Market Hill. The building suffered extensive bomb damage during the air-raid and, if the detail on the back of the photo is correct, collapsed some time in 1946.

On the reverse of the photo is handwritten: *"This building collapsed and fell just after the war, not during the war. One of our bricklayer's pushbike (sic) was completely ruined and that was the only casualty. The owner, Les Smith, said a few nasty words as it was almost a new machine and he got no compensation for it. Well, cannot write any more, so will sign off. H. Dawkins and B. Counsell."*

Since an article appeared in the IW County Press relating to 'time-capsule' I have been contacted by three people that have a connection with it:

- First to contact me was **Bev Cattell** of Cowes. Bev had read the article and soon realised that it had been written by her late father, Harry Dawkins.
- **Tiz Tomalin** contacted me from her home in San Francisco. Tiz is a Cowes girl by birth and her late father had owned the *Palmyra Restaurant* right next door to the *George Hotel*. Her Father bought the hotel 'bomb-site' and had the apartments built that we see there today.
- **Joan Hall** who lives in Gurnard was excited to see her late husband's name on the Time-Sheet.

I am hoping that more information may be forthcoming from this intriguing 'find' and the **Friends of Northwood Cemetery** sincerely thank the workmen, **Ray Peacey** and **Chris Dunn**, for passing it over to us for safe keeping.

**Barry Sowerby**  
Archivist

## Butterfly Walk

On Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> July a group of 16 people, 12 IW Butterfly Conservation group members and five Friends of Northwood Cemetery (Barry Sowerby is both!) met in the Cemetery on an ideal warm and sunny day. Rob Wilson, Organiser of the IW Butterfly Conservation group, had arranged with Barry for the group to visit the Cemetery after seeing some **Purple Hairstreaks** and a possible **Silver-washed Fritillary** there last year. After an introduction by Rob and a brief history of the Cemetery by Jon Matthews, the group headed off to search for the target species the **Purple Hairstreak** and other butterflies.

Within 5 minutes of starting off a **Purple Hairstreak** was spotted dancing around the leaves of an oak. This species spends most of its life in oak trees the caterpillars feed on the oak buds, while the adults feed on aphid honeydew in oak and ash trees. You are lucky to find the adults as low down - as they are usually at the top of the tree when binoculars are essential. However, we were very pleased to see *three Purple Hairstreaks* fairly low down, sitting on the oak leaves (several members of the IW Butterfly Conservation group had never seen a **Purple Hairstreak** before!).



The Purple Hairstreak

Several members of the 'Blue' family were seen - the first was the **Holly Blue**. This species has pale blue underwings with small black dots. They have two broods a year. The caterpillars feed on Holly berries in spring and on Ivy berries in autumn. This is always the first blue butterfly to be seen in any year it is often seen in churchyards as both Holly and Ivy often occur here. It can be seen fluttering around trees and shrubs and rests on bushes rather than on the ground.

Several male **Common Blues**, with their beautiful violet-blue upper-wings, were seen among the flowers and long grasses of the conservation area and, more unusually, two of their smaller relative, the **Brown Argus**, which has brown upper-wings surrounded by orange crescents, a first sighting for Barry, who managed to take this photo.

We then moved on to the conservation area of the cemetery. This is a section that is cut just once a year, usually around the beginning of September.

The area was covered with longer grass with wildflowers and flowering bramble. Here we saw good numbers of several species that live in long grassland: **Small Skippers, Marbled Whites, Gatekeepers, Meadow Browns** and **Ringlets**.

We also saw some **Large** and **Small Whites** and a couple of **Commas** and also two **Speckled Woods**, a species which prefers to fly in dappled shade.

Four **Small Coppers** were also sighted a beautiful small butterfly with bright orange and dark brown upper-wings.

As we were thinking of exploring parts of the cemetery away from the conservation area, a large orange butterfly suddenly appeared and flew through the group. It settled low down on a leaf and confirmed Rob's suspicion that **Silver-washed Fritillaries** do occur in this cemetery! This one was a female and had probably strayed from Shamblers Copse as it is a woodland species. The caterpillars feed on violets



The Brown Argus

We also saw several moth species: Six-spot **Burnets**, a **Silver-Y**, one **Yellow Shell** and a **Small Fan-footed Wave**. On the upper side of the Rhododendron leaves were some **Rhododendron Leafhoppers**. This striking species is native to the United States, where it is known as the **Scarlet-and-Green Leafhopper**. It was introduced to Europe in the early 1900s, and can now be found widely in southern Britain. Apart from humans, they're one of the few species to get any benefit from the Rhododendron plant.

Several of us stayed on a bit longer and walked around the adjacent hay field, where a **Red Admirals** and **Peacocks** were new species for the day. A **Small Heath** was also seen in the Cemetery, bringing the total species count for the day to 16 an excellent 'result'!

It is very encouraging that the Cemetery has a special conservation area and I must emphasise how good this is for butterflies. I was also very impressed by the way that Bernie Coleman, the groundsman, had carefully trimmed around the wildflowers on the shorter grass outside the conservation area. Bees and butterflies are attracted to the patches of Bird's-foot Trefoil and other wildflowers on the short turf and those that grow over some of the graves. This really adds to the value of the Cemetery as a wildlife habitat. Well done, Bernie! The surrounding hedgerows, with an abundance of bramble flowers, are also valuable habitats for butterflies.

The IW Butterfly Conservation Group would like to thank the Friends of Northwood Cemetery for showing us around their butterfly-rich environment. We would very much like to return another time!

**Caroline Dudley**  
IW Butterfly Conservation Group